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Date: 2/9/96

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The Honorable Reed Hundt
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
1919 M Street, NW, Room 814
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Hundt:

On behalf of my child advocacy organization, I am writing to encourage you to strengthen the guidelines for the Children's Television Act of 1990 (MM No. 93-48).

Broadcast television can play an unprecedented role in nourishing the minds of our nation's children. In the Commission's own words: "There are many imaginative and exciting ways in which the medium can be used to further a child's understanding of a wide range of areas: history, science, literature, the environment, drama, music, fine arts, human relations, other cultures and languages, and basic skills such as reading and mathematics which are crucial to a child's development." (1974 FCC Policy Statement)

Broadcasters have the talent to create children's programs which are as educational as they are entertaining. Yet, today's children have greater access to sensationalistic talk shows, violent cartoons, and adult sitcoms that they do to programming designed to enrich their minds.

The FCC needs to strengthen the guidelines for the Children's Television Act by establishing real policies designed to safeguard the interests of our children. These should include a clearer definition of "educational" programming and a requirement that television stations air at least one hour a day of 30-minute educational shows between 7 a.m. and 10 p.m. in regularly scheduled time slots.

No other regulatory body is in a position to make this happen. Please...America's children are counting on you.

Sincerely,

Karen B. Nelson
(Signature)

KAREN B NELSON
Name (Printed)

Chair, Program Committee
Title

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MMA
93-48

February 1, 1996

Mr. Reed Hundt
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
1919 M Street NW
Washington, D.C.
20554

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Dear Chairman Hundt:

There seems to be nothing but controversy surrounding the V-chip proposition. Congress has found a heart-rendering appeal to protect children while the industry insists that the spirit of America's founding principles should guide government interventions. Certainly these positions deserve equal independent praise, yet the conflict remains.

May I suggest that a potentially suitable compromise may be to establish a dual rating system that has only one classification: Recommended for Mature Audiences (RMA). The classification rule is simple: Program content developers or directors could assign their product an RMA certificate, or not. If a program is for general audiences, it does not need any classification at all.

If programs appear without an RMA that, in wide judgment, should be RMA, then voluntary processes, or more exactly American processes, would address the specific cases. The leaders of America do not need to specify or define who or who is not mature; after all, that is mostly a parental responsibility and certainly not one for any government to decide. However, persons of adult age are responsible for their actions under laws of their making. Maturity, in the adult case, is usually not in question since individual behavior speaks for itself.

The question of maturity takes the V-chip issue away from a conflict between protecting innocence and the first amendment. Instead, it offers a means for parents and others to determine appropriate selections when making decisions for those in their charge.

Furthermore, the RMA certification can be made dynamic in that it may be content or segment specific within a general audience framework. Those needing to select only general audience programs can rest assured that any topic deserving a mature audience can be wisely identified and selected when desired. This characteristic may apply to news and other information programs that, at times, carry content better intended for a mature audience but often present content for general audience viewing.

There are no simple solutions when value systems differ widely. I suggest that common sense makes for good rules, and that complexity should be simplified wherever and whenever reasonable people share similar and well-intentioned principles. I welcome your thoughts.

Sincerely,



Victor A. Nowakowski
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